

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ADDIS 04141 071253Z

41

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INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

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AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJECT: LEVINE'S VIEWS ON ETHIOPIA

SUMMARY

DR. DONALD LEVINE, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, AUTHOR
OF TWO BOOKS (INCLUDING "WAX AND GOLD") AND SEVERAL
ARTICLES ON ETHIOPIA, WAS INVITED BY THE EPMG TO PARTICIPATE
IN TWO-DAY SEMINAR ON FEUDALISM AT ADDIS UNIVERSITY.
HE EXTENDED HIS STAY TO TWELVE DAYS DURING WHICH HE
ATTEMPTED TO EXPLORE THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION.
HE WAS ABLE TO RENEW ACQUAINTANCE WITH SEVERAL OLD
FRIENDS, AT LEAST TWO OF WHOM ARE NOW MINISTERS, AND
TALKED WITH DIRG POLAD PIKAEL IMRU. THIS MESSAGE
REPORTS LEVINE'S VIEWS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION. IT
IS ESSENTIAL THAT ALL SOURCES BE PROTECTED. END SUMMARY

1. AFTER NUMEROUS CONVERSATIONS AT ALL LEVELS IN ADDIS ABABA
(LEVINE SPEAKS AMHARIC), LEVINE CONCLUDED THAT VIRTUALLY NO ONE
IN ADDIS ABABA, FROM STREET BOYS UP, SUPPORT THE DIRG, ALTHOUGH
HE ALSO CAME TO FEEL THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST HAVE SOME SUPPORT
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PAGE 02 ADDIS 04141 071253Z

FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE, PARTICULARLY THE SOUTH. MIKEAL IMRU

REPORTEDLY ADMITTED THIS TO BE TRUCE. SURPRISINGLY, HOWEVER, MOST OF THE HIGH-RANKING PEOPLE WHOM LEVINE TALKED EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT EVEN THOUGH THEY MIGHT PERSONALLY BE DESTROYED BY THE REVOLUTION, THINGS WOULD EVENTUALLY "WORK OUT." LEVINE NOTED THAT, ALTHOUGH THE DIRG'S POSITIVE PROGRAMS HAVE LITTLE SUPPORT, THE NEGATIVE PROGRAMS, SUCH AS THE LEVELING OF RICH PEOPLE AND LANDLORDS, SEEM POPULAR, MOSTLY DUE TO ENVY.

2. LEVINE IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS COVERTLY INVOLVED IN ETHIOPIAN AFFAIRS, PARTICULARLY WITH STUDENTS AND LABOR UNIONS. HE DOUBTS, HOWEVER, THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE A HAND IN ORGANIZING THE DIRG, AS SOME PEOPLE HAVE ALLEGED TO HIM. ALTHOUGH LEVINE SEES THE CURRENT INFLUENCE OF MARXISM-LENINISM AS STRONG, HE BELIEVES THAT THE AUTHORITARIAN DIRG WILL NOT BE ABLE TO APPEASE ITS LEFTIST CRITICS WITH RADICAL RHETORIC AND ETHIOPIAN NATIONALISM WILL EVENTUALLY TRIUMPH OVER MARXISM.

3. LEVINE HAS IT FROM SEVERAL HIGH SOURCES THAT THE EPMG IS CURRENTLY BUILDING THREE "CONCENTRATION CAMPS" (THEIR TERMINOLOGY) FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS. THE CAMPS WILL BE LOCATED IN THE OGADEN AND NEAR ADDIS ABABA ON THE DESSIE AND JIMMA ROAD. COMMENT: OTHER USUALLY WELL INFORMED DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES HAVE ALSO HEARD THIS. END COMMENT.

4. LEVINE BELIEVES IT VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT THE NATIONAL WORK CAMPAIGN (ZEMECHA) WILL BE EXTENDED FOR ANOTHER YEAR. HE BELIEVES THIS IS LIKELY TO ENCOUNTER GREAT RESISTANCE FROM STUDENTS, BUT THAT THE DIRG FEELS IT NECESSARY TO KEEP AS MANY STUDENTS AS POSSIBLE OUT OF THE CAPITAL FOR ANOTHER YEAR.

5. ACCORDING TO LEVINE'S INFORMANTS, MAJOR MANGISTU IS DEFINITELY PRE-EMINENT IN THE DIRG, BUT AN INNER COUNCIL OF TWELVE RETAINS MOST OF THE DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY. COMMENT: EMBASSY INFORMANTS HAVE RECENTLY INDICATED THAT ONLY FIVE TO SEVEN DIRG MEMBERS ARE INFLUENTIAL. END COMMENT. THE DIRG, ACCORDING TO LEVINE, HAS "DUG ITSELF INTO A HOLE" AND WILL BECOME EVEN MORE REPRESSIVE IN ORDER TO REMAIN IN POWER. HE SEES NO ALTERNATIVE TO MILITARY RULE FOR A LONG TIME, EVEN THOUGH THERE MAY BE CHANGES IN THE DIRG. LEVINE'S INFORMATION CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ADDIS 04141 071253Z

TION ON THE "POLITBURO" (DR. SENAY LIKKE, DR. HAILE FIDA, ET AL) INDICATES THAT THEY HAVE LITTLE INFLUENCE ON DECISIONS BUT A STRONG INFLUENCE ON IDEOLOGY.

6. LEVINE HAS NOTED A GREAT INCREASE IN ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE GALLA, WHICH HE FEELS HAS GREATLY ALARMED NON-GALLAS. HE CONTINUES TO BELIEVE, HOWEVER (AS EXPRESSED IN HIS MOST RECENT BOOK), THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE DIVERSE

GALLA TRIBAL GROUPS WILL ORGANIZE EFFECTIVELY AND COORDINATE THEIR ACTIVITIES. THE GREATEST DANGER IN HIS OPINION IS THAT THE AMHARA CORE GROUP (THE ETHIOPIAN WASPS) AS WELL AS MANY TIGRES WILL FEEL THREATENED BY INCREASED GALLA NATIONALISM AND TAKE STRONG SUPPRESSIVE ACTION AGAINST IT. IN LEVINE'S VIEW THE DIRG IS CONTROLLED BY AMHARAS WHO CAN AND WOULD REACT AGAINST THE GALLAS IF THEY FELT THREATENED. (COMMENT: EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT POSSIBLE MAJORITY OF DIRG MEMBERS INCLUDING MAJOR MENGISTU ARE GALLA BUT THAT MOST OF THE POWERFUL "CORE GROUP" ARE NON-GALLA. END COMMENT) LEVINE CONCEDED IN DISCUSSION THAT THE SOUTHERN GALLAS ARE THE MAIN SUPPORTERS OF THE REVOLUTION SINCE THEY NOT ONLY GAINED LAND BUT ALSO RID THEMSELVES OF WHAT THEY VIEWED AS AMHARA COLONIALISM BY LAND REFORM. THE OTHER AREAS OF THE COUNTRY (MEANING ESSENTIALLY GURAGE, AMHARA AND TIGRE AREAS) ARE EITHER NEUTRAL TO THE REVOLUTION, (AS IN THE CASE OF THE GURAGES WHO NEITHER WERE DOMINATED BY AMHARA LANDLORDS NOR HAD EXCESS LAND TO DISTRIBUTE), OR OPPOSE THE REVOLUTION BECAUSE THEY OPPOSE GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE IN THEIR COMMUNAL LAND-HOLDING SYSTEM. LEVINE THOUGHT THAT FOR THE PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, AT LEAST, THE REVOLUTION MIGHT BE TERMED A GALLA REVOLUTION. COMMENT: BECAUSE OF LEVINE'S BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE OF ETHIOPIA AND HIS GOOD ACCESS, WE CONSIDER HIVS IMPRESSIONS SIGNIFICANT. HIS SOCIAL SCIENCE BACKGROUND AND HIS WELL-KNOWN FAVORABLE VIEWS TOWARDS THE 1960 COUP ATTEMPT ALSO APPARENTLY INCLINED OFFICIAL ETHIOPIANS TO SPEAK CANDIDLY WITH HIM. END COMMENT HUMMEL

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